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SUBJECT: ISRAELI-EGYPTIAN CONTACTS ON LIBYAN HUMANITARIAN
SUPPLIES FOR GAZA

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Luis G. Moreno, Reason 1.4 (b) (d)

¶1. (C) MOD Arab Affairs Adviser David Hacham briefed PolCouns December 3 on ongoing Israeli-Egyptian contacts regarding the Libyan ship bearing humanitarian relief supplies for Gaza. Hacham said the Israeli Navy closely tracked the course of the Libyan ship on its way to Gaza. He noted that Libya made no attempt to coordinate the ship's entry into the coastal waters off Gaza, adding that Libya is a "hostile state" that has no relations with Israel. When the Libyan vessel entered Gazan waters December 1, the Israeli Navy forced it to withdraw into the Mediterranean. (Note: According to an IDF briefing paper provided to DAO, the ship was carrying 30 Libyan, Syrian and Egyptian citizens as well as many tons of humanitarian supplies.)

¶2. (C) Hacham said his liaison contacts in the Egyptian General Intelligence Service (EGIS) were in close touch during the incident, and that the Egyptians passed a message to Defense Minister Barak requesting that Barak authorize the Libyan ship to enter Gaza. After some consideration of the request, Barak turned it down on the grounds that Libya is a hostile state and that the Libyans had not attempted to coordinate the delivery of the relief in advance.

¶3. (C) According to Hacham, the Israelis made a counter-offer that the Libyan relief supplies be off-loaded in Egypt, the Egyptians would undertake to inspect them to ensure that all of it was indeed humanitarian relief, and that the Egyptians would then transport it into Gaza via the Kerem Shalom crossing. In response to PolCouns' question whether it would be acceptable to Israel to have the supplies pass through Rafah Crossing, Hacham said Israel's preference was for the Egyptians to use Kerem Shalom, the designated crossing for humanitarian relief. Asked whether other Arab states without relations with Israel could also make similar arrangements to deliver humanitarian relief through Egypt, Hacham said he thought the GOI would review such requests on a case by case basis.

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